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THE EFFECT OF NURSING ON THE WOMAN WHEN RETIRED

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MOST readers of the JOURNAL are still in the active practise of the profession and to these this brief paper may seem of little interest, but there are many who anticipate retirement in a few years at most and to this class is offered suggestions which may not be untimely,—for anticipation of future needs is ever helpful in the practice of present economy, which term is used in its broadest sense, for to apply the word to money only is to miss a large proportion of its value.

We have had many a treatise on the work of those whose nursing activities are in the past and scores have demonstrated that various vocations may be successfully pursued, but we purpose in this brief article to speculate on what the woman really is when she has retired—to look into her individual personal life.

One has said, “We are a part of everything we have met,” and who has had broader experience in all grades of living than she who, after two or three years in hospital wards, has responded to calls by night or by day to every condition of mankind—rich or poor, in city or country? How with the fleeting years we value the training and practice as, indulging in retrospection, the vigor of forty-five or fifty is compared with that of twenty-five, and we realize that this particular service must be surrendered to others and another life begun, for which the past ten, fifteen, or twenty years have been a preparation. So surely do God’s plans unfold for us.

Hospital service, with the early duties of the probationer, furnishes invaluable training for housekeeping, and this is but the opening to the broad experience of private nursing. In no other calling does one enter into the holy of holies of family life, often forming life long friendships, while the beautiful surroundings of the luxurious homes and the not infrequent opportunities for travel are of great educational value.

How many have had infinite satisfaction in ministering to the great middle class, feeling here the implicit confidence and true bond of sympathy existing between the wealthy patient and the nurse.

How does this affect the woman of fifty when, if living with friends, she plays the rôle of ideal maiden aunt, doing the “whatever” as it lies at her hand or as the family purse indicates, and how much is included

in that old-fashioned word; sometimes all manner of, to us, common-places.

What if she establishes herself as fruit or poultry grower, masseuse, matron in a home for aged and infirm or in one for young and irrepressible, or in any of the diverging paths which a woman may walk single handed? What is her condition of mind and heart? Is she sighing for the flesh pots of Egypt? Has a decade or two in the life of luxury made her restless under the new conditions?

Has she formed her experiences into ideals and crystallized them so that she can live with them, or are her ideals like lighthouses which shine on us from afar and leave the footpaths in darkness in the shadow of mountainous obstacles?

The right ideals teach us to curtail our expenses to suit the more limited income, to spend less for clothes, make more modest presents, and in every way to suit the outlay to the income.

If the nurse was a student, she found leisure for reading from the pens of great masters, and what resource is more uplifting than the product of great minds which product we have assimilated and made our own? Can we not better fill the common offices of every-day life when through the artist's eye we see "sermons in stones, books in the running brook—and good in everything;" when we can use the former experiences of our lives as a great social leveller, a bridge between the wealthy and the common people, and with taste cultivated amid artistic fancies furnish our hall bedroom, tiny flat, or modest house so that it shall speak of knowledge not all learned in schools? If we set our own table, thus escaping the, to many, inevitable boarding house, our viands shall savor of French chefs; and the linen and china, not of foreign import, may suggest the refinement of a woman who has seen much of the best and who through this has learned to adapt herself to what she can maintain.

If this ideal woman has not too long pursued her chosen calling she will again gather up the threads of social life, renewing, if possible, old friendships and at the same time not forgetting the stranger within her gates.

If, with nursing life, philanthropic interest has been developed, the opportunities in this line will not be neglected, and so long as we are in the world so long may we see a creature more needy than ourselves. "Let us then do good unto all men as we have opportunity."

These words from the pen of Van Dyke form a fitting closing:

"Let me but do my work from day to day,
In field or forest, at the desk or loom,
In roaring market place or tranquil room

Let me but find it in my heart to say
When vagrant wishes beckon me astray,
'This is my work: my blessing, not my doom,
Of all who live, I am the one, by whom
This work can best be done in my own way,'
Then shall I see it not too great nor small
To suit my spirit and to prove my powers;
Then shall I cheerfully greet the laboring hours,
And cheerfully turn when the long shadows fall,
At eventide, to play and love and rest,
Because I know for me my work is best."

NURSING IN MISSION STATIONS: INDIA

THE Mary Taber Schell Memorial Hospital of Vellore, India, which is now in its fourth year, issues an interesting illustrated report of its last year's work. The hospital and dispensary are in charge of two women physicians assisted by a trained nurse, Miss Lillian M. Hart, as superintendent of a staff of eleven native women who are in training as nurses, and of two who are in the compounding room. The hospital has a capacity of forty-two beds and admitted eight hundred and sixty-five new patients during last year. It contains a European ward for the use of missionary and civilian ladies which has been occupied the greater part of the year. Over thirty thousand "out-patients" have been treated. Many important operations are performed in the hospital, and the picture of the operating-room shows as commodious and well-kept a place for work as one could wish. Some of the patients who are unwilling to remain in the hospital are operated upon in the dispensary and are taken to their homes a short time after recovering from the anesthetic. The dispensary is open from seven to twelve A.M. and from three to five P.M.

In the morning the patients are seen free of charge, except that they put half a cent into a box for the purpose, to pay for their chit, a small piece of paper on which is written their name, number and date for reference when they are to come again. In the afternoon a small fee of about sixteen cents is charged, so very few come at this time, but when they do they are seen more carefully and there is time for a little personal talk with them. As each one makes her final visit she is encouraged to place a thank-offering in the charity box, and all who can are asked to pay for their medicines. The amount thus obtained has increased with each succeeding year.

Some of the difficulties encountered in the dispensary work are described thus: